

TO: Members of the House Local Government and Urban Policy Committee
Interested Parties

FROM: Steve Arwood, Executive Director

DATE: March 28, 2006

SUBJECT: House Bill 5814

Please accept this written comment as our opposition to House Bill 5814.

House Bill 5814 takes the unprecedented action of prospectively denying public land ownership to the citizens of Michigan.

1. HB 5814 would allow local units of government to veto public ownership and public access land and facilities for the enjoyment of all forms of recreation. This will also have a direct impact on the tourist and natural resource based economy (forestry/minerals) at a time when the Michigan economy cannot suffer additional setbacks.
2. HB 5814 would appear to make PILT a "tax" (page 2, paragraph (4).) In the context of the bill as drafted, this appears an attempt by reference to make non-payment of PILT an action that can be followed by foreclosure. We are struggling to understand how this would work, especially as the state would ultimately receive the lands foreclosed and whether one governmental agency can foreclose another. These are lands held in trust for the people of the state, not a commercial enterprise.
3. We are opposed to moving the payment of PILT back to the restricted funds as the sole source of funding local units of government. All citizens of this state enjoy public land, not just those that purchase licenses and permits. In fact, GF/GP for the MDNR now stands at approximately \$3 for every citizen of this state and there are signs that further erosion in this funding will occur. The recent compromise that created the 50/50 split in PILT responsibility was fair and should continue.

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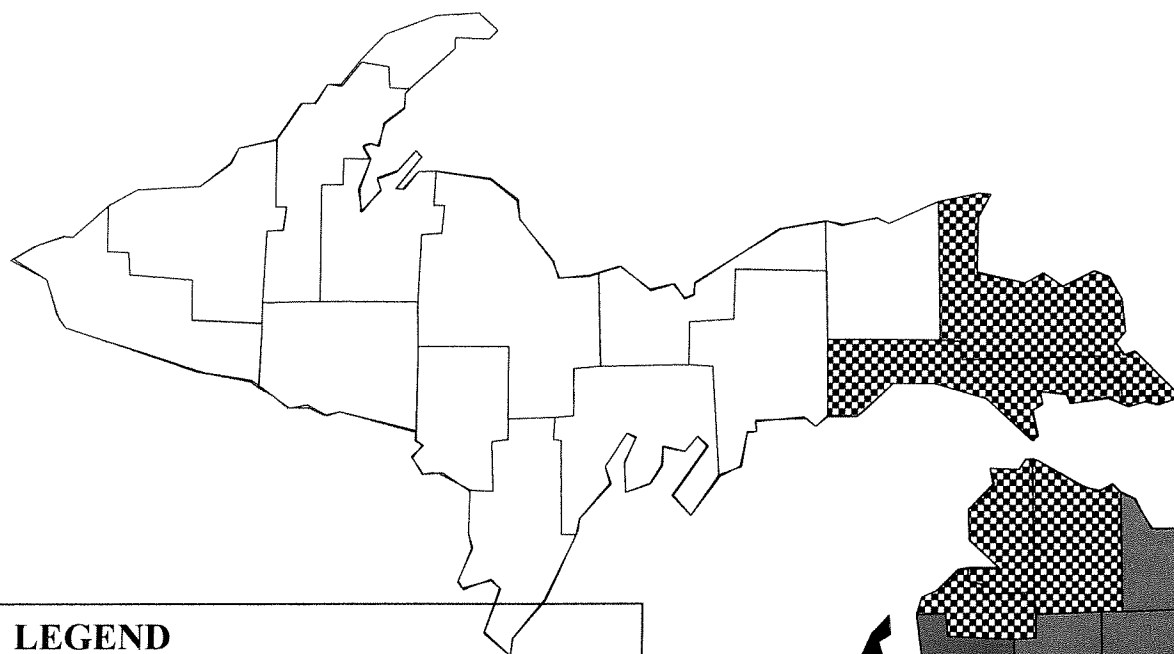
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4. This bill not only gives local units of government veto control over the purchase of new public land, but a block on the appropriations process itself. The prime example of that would be Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund purchases recommended to the legislature and approved through the appropriation process.
5. The land conservancies that are members of Heart of the Lakes have assisted in conserving over 370,000 acres in Michigan. While most of these transactions were private, many included partnerships with the State of Michigan where conservancies assisted in transactions and the ultimate ownership of the land ended up with the citizens. This bill will alter those partnerships and set land conservation back many steps.
6. Last, PILT is a budget prioritization and appropriations issue. It is certain that these tough economic times are forcing many tough choices in that process. We suggest that instead of prospectively limiting the purchase of lands for the public, the legislature prioritize the PILT obligation through the current method and statute.

Thank you for your consideration.

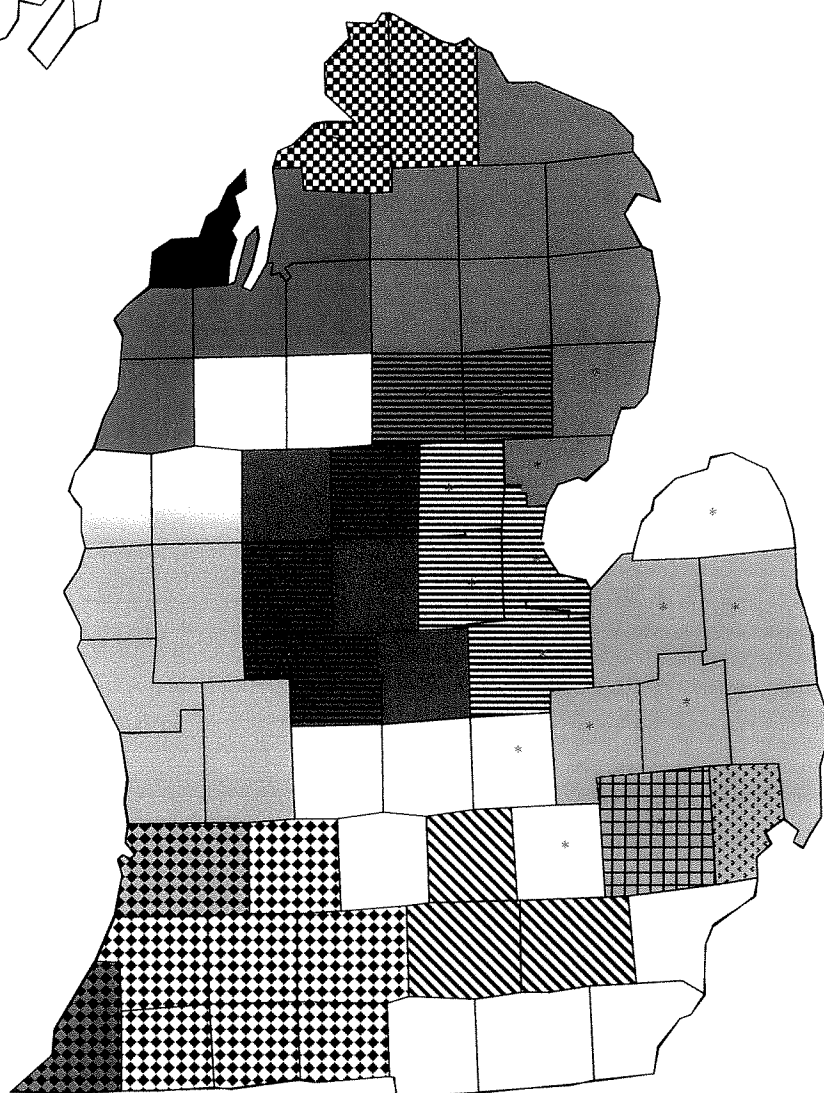
Heart of the Lakes Center for Land Conservation Policy

Member Conservancies' Service Areas



LEGEND

-  Chikaming Open Lands
-  Chippewa Watershed Conservancy
-  Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy
-  Great Lakes Bioregional Land Conservancy
-  Headwaters Land Conservancy
-  Land Conservancy of West Michigan
-  Leelanau Conservancy
-  Little Forks Conservancy
-  Little Traverse Conservancy
-  Macomb Land Conservancy
-  North Oakland Headwaters Land Conservancy
-  Raisin Valley Land Trust
-  Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy
-  Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy
-  Washtenaw Land Trust



MEMBERS WITH STATEWIDE SERVICE AREAS

Land Trust Alliance – Midwest
 Michigan Karst Conservancy
 Michigan Natural Areas Council
 Michigan Nature Association
 Sporting Lands Alliance
 The Conservation Fund
 The Nature Conservancy in Michigan

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Release Date: June 30, 2005
Last Update: November 09, 2005

Economic Impact

Natural Resources Boost Michigan's Economy

- Michigan ranks 3rd in the nation in licensed hunters (more than 750,000) who contribute \$1.3 billion annually to our economy. Some 2.6 million non-consumptive users contribute \$1.2 billion to our economy.
- Michigan ranks 8th in the nation in numbers of licensed resident and nonresident anglers who contribute \$2 billion annually to our economy.
- Michigan ranks 1st in the nation in the number of registered boats and snowmobiles; recreational boating contributes \$2 billion annually to our economy and when there is an abundance of snow, snowmobilers create a \$1 billion bonanza for northern Michigan communities.
- With 22 million visitors annually, state parks and recreation areas play an important role in Michigan's tourism industry. In 1997, visitors to state parks and recreation areas spent an estimated \$484 million, about half of that within 20 miles of their destinations.
- Michigan's nearly one million registered boaters spent about \$700 million on trips in 1998.
- Michigan DNR manages the largest dedicated state forest system in the nation; forest products industry and recreational users contribute \$12 billion and 200,000 associated jobs annually to our economy.

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